



MINUTES
GEORGIA LAND CONSERVATION PROGRAM
Fourth Quarter Council Meeting
October 25, 2013 - 9: 30 AM

Call To Order

After establishing a quorum, the meeting was called to order.

Present at the meeting were: Steve Stancil, Chairman, Robert Farris, Stacy Patton and Paul Michael.

By Conference Phone: John Bembry, Mark Williams and Gretchen Corbin.

Chairman Stancil welcomed Gretchen Corbin to the Council.

Approval of the Minutes

Chairman Stancil presented minutes from June 12, 2013, Georgia Land Conservation Council meeting for approval. Paul Michael made a motion seconded by Robert Farris to approve the minutes as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

Proposed By-law Change

Andrew Szwak stated that at the last meeting held on June 12, 2013, a proposed change to the By-laws was recommended to add the Commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources to serve as the Vice-chairman of the Council. The following proposed change is being presented to the Council for a vote. Article III Section 4 of the Georgia Land Conservation By-laws will read: The State Property Officer shall serve as Chairperson of the Council. The Commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources shall serve as Vice-chairperson of the Council and shall assume all general powers and duties of the Chairperson in the absence of the State Property Officer. Stacy Patton made a motion seconded by Robert Farris to approve the By-laws as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

FY2014 Meeting Schedule

Chairman Stancil proposed the following meeting dates for the 2014 Land Conservation Council Meetings: February 6, May 1, August 7, and October 30, 2014. Paul Michael made a motion seconded by Mark Williams to approve the proposed meeting dates. The motion passed unanimously.

Update on Trust Fund Balance

Andrew Szwak stated that we have received the most recent check off contribution from the Department of Revenue and they are up, \$55 thousand came to the program for this past year and that is up from last year, when we received around \$40 thousand. The total that has been contributed by taxpayers to the program is around \$440 thousand since 2006. These funds have been added to the \$300 thousand that came to the program through the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Greenspace Program and we have accepted \$736,704 in donations overall. Of that amount \$358,838 has been expended to pay due diligence costs that have been incurred by state agencies (Forestry, DNR and State Soil and Water Conservation Commission) when they accept conservation easements. The balance is \$377,866. What we are starting to see is more fee title donations being brought to state agencies and right now we are not authorized to make grants for those types of projects. Currently we are restricted to only assist conservation easements. We have also noticed that there are a couple of projects that come in and either have very expensive surveys involved or other expenses that would cause us to exceed the \$30 thousand dollars cap that is on the grants. The difference between the due diligence costs and what grants are able to fund is made up by the donor themselves in most cases. This could be a potential action item for Council members to consider as we look forward to continuing to improve our grant programs and how to support state agencies. A motion was made by Stacy Patton and seconded by Paul Michael to allow due diligence grants for fee title donations up to \$50,000 per project. The motion passed unanimously.

Pending Project Update

Steve Friedman stated that the Ebenezer Crossing project is a 250 acre acquisition that the Trust of Public Land is working on that would be a donation and would fall within the motion that was just passed. It is a tract that is partially on the Savannah River and Ebenezer Creek. The site has been tied back to the Civil War and has African-American historical significance. This would be a donation facilitated by the Trust for Public Land. They have applied for a federal grant. The estimated project cost is \$600,000. Curt Soper stated that the sources of funds would be a Federal Coastal Grant and two private foundations that have contributed funds to this project. The due diligence grant funds from the GLCP will also help.

Marketing Collateral Update

Andrew Szwak stated that staff had followed up from the last meeting by updating the marketing materials. We have refreshed what we are using and we have adopted new brand standards that are similar to GEFA's. We have refreshed the letterhead, put some maps together, and developed summary sheets. If any Council members ever need to use any of these or similar types of information we can get it to them. John Bemby asked to get a stack of the summary sheets to use at a conservation easement panel that is on in November. Andrew will also get them on the website.

Legislative Review

Andrew Szwak stated that the primary item for the legislature is the Legacy bill and that we had an opportunity to meet with the House Natural Resources Committee regarding it. Kevin Clark stated that we presented to the House Natural Resources Committee and that it was good to be able to get with them and refresh them on what the Land Conservation Program does. We mirrored a presentation that we gave back in March to the committee near the end of the session but we went through and kept in the forefront what we do and the good work that is done by the Land Conservation Program. There are no new developments but it did allow us time to have an audience with that group and refresh them on what we do. Kevin stated that we still plan to get with the Governor's office and discuss how much they want us to push legislation for the changes that we have recommended. The following are items that we want to have incorporated: 1) have the Department of Agriculture Commissioner added to the Land Council, 2) change the meeting schedule from mandatory quarterly meetings to annually and as needed for business to conduct, 3) to replace "organizational documents" with "articles of incorporation and bylaws" in the definition of non-government organizations; 4) refine the definition of permanent protection by state agencies to require a replacement if the property is sold and 5) look at the eligible project expenses and remove holding costs, overhead costs and finders fees but leave the real estate commission expenses. These are the recommendations we are going to make on the legislation and will keep the Council apprised of how it goes.

Emerging Issues

Steve Friedman stated that the Land Conservation Program made a loan to the Conservation Fund in January of this year to help buy the Red Stripe Tract and the DNR will be seeking for approval from the State Properties Commission Board to close in December and repay that loan. Also, DNR is talking to Andrew about another loan with The Nature Conservancy for a project on the Altamaha River that is about 400 acres. The DNR and the Marine Corps will partner in the project, but since DNR can't move quick enough to acquire the land before the landowner plans to sell it, The Nature Conservancy can step in to accept a loan, acquire the land and then transfer it to the DNR when state funds available.

Adjournment

Johnny Bemby made a motion seconded by Stacy Patton to adjourn the meeting at 10:00 a.m. The motion passed unanimously.

Kim Yawn, Senior Executive Assistant

Kevin Clark, Executive Director